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# The History of the Treatment of the Feeble-Minded

BY

WALTER E. FERNALD, M.D.

*Reprinted from the Report of the Proceedings of the Twentieth  
National Conference of Charities and Correction*



W. H. Shuttleworth

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## THE HISTORY OF THE TREATMENT OF THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

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The first recorded attempt to educate an idiot was made about the year 1800, by Itard, the celebrated physician-in-chief to the National Institution for the Deaf and Dumb at Paris, upon a boy found wild in a forest in the centre of France, and known as the "savage of Aveyron." "This boy could not speak any human tongue, and was devoid of all understanding and knowledge." Believing him to be a savage, for five years Itard endeavored with great skill and perseverance to develop at the same time the intelligence of his pupil and the theories of the materialistic school of philosophy. Itard finally became convinced that this boy was an idiot, and abandoned the attempt to educate him.

In the year 1818 and for a few years afterward, several idiotic children were received and given instruction at the American Asylum for the Deaf and Dumb at Hartford, and a fair degree of improvement in physical condition, habits, and speech was obtained.

In the year 1828 Dr. Ferret, physician at the Bicêtre in Paris, attempted to teach a few of the more intelligent idiots who were confined in this hospital to read and write and to train them to habits of cleanliness and order. In 1831 Dr. Fabret attempted the same work at the Salpêtrière; and in 1833 Dr. Voisin opened his private school for idiots in Paris. None of these attempts was successful enough to insure its continuance.

In 1837 Dr. E. Seguin, a pupil of Itard and Esquirol, began the private instruction of idiots at his own expense. In 1842 he was made the instructor of the school at the Bicêtre, which had been



reopened by Dr. Voisin in 1839. Dr. Seguin remained at the Bicêtre only one year, retiring to continue the work in his private school in the Hospice des Incurables. After seven years of patient work and experiments and the publication of two or three pamphlets describing the work, a committee from the Academy of Sciences at Paris in 1844 examined critically and thoroughly his methods of training and educating idiot children, and reported to the Academy, giving it the highest commendation and declaring that, up to the time he commenced his labors in 1837, idiots could not be educated by any means previously known or practised, but that he had solved the problem. His work thus approved by the highest authority, Dr. Seguin continued his private school in Paris until the Revolution in 1848, when he came to America, where he was instrumental in establishing schools for idiots in various States.

In 1846 Dr. Seguin published his classical and comprehensive "Treatise on Idiocy," which was crowned by the Academy and has continued to be the standard text-book for all interested in the education of idiots up to the present time. His elaborate system of teaching and training idiots consisted in the careful "adaptation of the principles of physiology, through physiological means and instruments, to the development of the dynamic, perceptive, reflective, and spontaneous functions of youth." This physiological education of defective brains as a result of systematic training of the special senses, the functions, and the muscular system, was looked upon as a visionary theory, but has been verified and confirmed by modern experiments and researches in physiological psychology.

Dr. Seguin's school was visited by scientists and philanthropists from nearly every part of the civilized world, and, his methods bearing the test of experience, other schools were soon established in other countries, based upon these methods.

In 1842 Dr. Guggenbuhl established a school upon the slope of the Abendenberg in Switzerland, for the care and training of cretins, so many of whom are found in the dark, damp valleys of the Alps. This school was very successful in its results, and attracted much attention throughout Europe. At Berlin, in 1842, a school for the instruction of idiots was opened by Dr. Saegert. In England the publication of the results of the work of Drs. Seguin, Guggenbuhl, and Saegert, and the efforts of Drs. Connolly and Reed, led to the establishment of a private school at Bath in 1846, and later to the finely appointed establishments at Colchester and Earlswood.

The published description of the methods and results of these European schools attracted much interest and attention in America. In this country the necessity and humanity of caring for and scientifically treating the insane, the deaf and dumb, and the blind had become the policy of many of our most progressive States. The class of helpless and neglected idiots who had no homes, as a rule were cared for in jails and poorhouses. A few idiots who had been received at the special schools for the deaf and dumb and the blind showed considerable improvement after a period of training. Other cases who were especially troublesome had been sent to the insane hospitals, where it was shown that the habits and behavior of this class could be changed very much for the better. In their reports for 1845 Drs. Woodward and Brigham, superintendents of the State Insane Hospitals in Massachusetts and New York respectively, urged the necessity of making public provision for the education of idiots in those States. On the 13th of January, 1846, Dr. F. P. Backus, a member of the New York Senate, made the first step toward any legislative action in this country in behalf of idiots, by moving that the portion of the last State census relating to idiots be referred to the committee on medical societies of which he was chairman. On the following day he made an able report, giving the number of idiots in the State, a brief history of the European schools, with a description of their methods and results, and showed conclusively that schools for idiots were a want of the age. On the 25th of March following he introduced a bill providing for the establishment of an asylum for idiots. The bill passed the Senate, but was defeated in the Assembly.

In Massachusetts, on the 23d of January in the same year, 1848~~6~~ Judge Byington, a member of the House of Representatives, moved an order providing for the appointment of a committee to "consider the expediency of appointing commissioners to inquire into the condition of idiots in the Commonwealth, to ascertain their number, and whether anything can be done for their relief." This order was passed, and, as a result, a board of three commissioners was appointed, of which Dr. S. G. Howe was chairman. This commission made a report in part in 1847, which included a letter from Hon. G. S. Sumner, in which he described in glowing terms the methods and results of the school of Dr. Seguin in Paris. In March, 1848, the commission made a complete and exhaustive report, with statisti-



cal tables and minute details, and recommended the opening of an experimental school. This report was widely circulated and read throughout America and Europe, and furnishes to-day the basis of cyclopedic literature on this topic.

By a resolve passed on the 8th of May, 1848, the legislature appropriated \$2,500 annually for the purpose of establishing an experimental school, with the proviso that ten indigent idiots from different parts of the State should be selected for instruction. This act founded the first State institution in America. The first pupil was received on the 1st of October, 1848. The direction of the school was undertaken by Dr. Howe, and for several years was carried on in connection with the Perkins Institution for the Blind, of which he was the director. Mr. J. B. Richards, an able instructor, was engaged as teacher, and went to Europe to study the methods of the foreign schools. The school was considered so successful that, at the end of three years, the legislature doubled the annual appropriation, and by incorporation converted the experimental school into a permanent one under the name of "The Massachusetts School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Youth."

Two months after the legislature had authorized the establishment of the Massachusetts School, a private school was opened at Barre, Mass., by Dr. H. B. Wilbur, the first pupil being received in July, 1848. In the modest announcement of the project Dr. Wilbur says, "This institution is designed for the education and management of all children who by reason of mental infirmity are not fit subjects for ordinary school instruction." The school was organized on the family plan. The pupils all sat at the same table with the principal, and were constantly under the supervision of some member of the family in the hours of recreation and rest as well as of training. This private school has been continued on the same plan, and has been very successful and prosperous under the administration of Dr. Wilbur and that of his able successor, the late Dr. George Brown.

In the State of New York the legislative attempt defeated in 1846 was renewed in 1847, and this bill also passed the Senate, to be again defeated in the Assembly. The necessity for action was urged in the governor's annual messages in the years 1848, 1850, and 1851. Finally, in July, 1851, an act was passed appropriating \$6,000 annually for two years, for the purpose of maintaining an experimen-



tal school for idiots. A suitable building, near Albany, was rented and the school opened in October, 1851. The trustees selected for superintendent Dr. H. B. Wilbur, who had so successfully organized and conducted the private school at Barre, Mass., for more than three years previously. In the first annual report of the trustees, published in 1851, the aims and purposes of the proposed school were summed up as follows :—

We do not propose to create or supply faculties absolutely wanting; nor to bring all grades of idiocy to the same standard of development or discipline; nor to make them all capable of sustaining creditably all the relations of a social and moral life; but rather to give to dormant faculties the greatest possible development, and to apply these awakened faculties to a useful purpose under the control of an aroused and disciplined will. At the base of all our efforts lies the principle that, as a rule, none of the faculties are absolutely wanting, but dormant, undeveloped, and imperfect.

This school attracted much attention from educators and others, and was frequently and critically inspected by the members of the legislature and other State officials. On the 11th of April, 1853, the legislature authorized the erection of new buildings. The citizens of Syracuse donated the land, and the corner-stone of the first structure in this country built expressly for the purpose of caring for and training idiots was laid Sept. 8, 1854. The school at Syracuse continued under Dr. Wilbur's direction until his death in 1883. In this school the physiological method of education has been most thoroughly and scientifically carried out, and a high degree of success attained.

Pennsylvania was the third State to take up the work. In the winter of 1852 a private school for idiots was opened in Germantown, by Mr. J. B. Richards, the first teacher in the school at South Boston. This school was incorporated April 7, 1853, as the Pennsylvania Training School for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Children. The first money received for its support was raised by private subscription, and the State contributed an equal sum. In 1855 the present site at Elwyn was secured, and the foundations laid for the present magnificent institution village with nearly a thousand inmates.

The Ohio Institution at Columbus was established April 17, 1857, and pupils were received the same year. The State of Ohio has

from the beginning provided for her feeble-minded children on a more liberal and generous scale than any other State. The Columbus Institution, with its substantial buildings and splendid equipment, its admirably conducted school and industrial departments, has been made one of the best institutions in the world devoted to the care and training of this special class.

In Connecticut, in 1855, a State commission was appointed to investigate the conditions of the idiotic population, and to consider the advisability of making suitable provision for the education of this class. The report of this commission resulted in the establishment of the Connecticut School for Imbeciles at Lakeville, in 1858, under the superintendency of Dr. H. M. Knight. This school, although aided by the State, has been largely supported by private benevolence and payments from private pupils.

The Kentucky Institution at Frankfort was opened in 1860. For many years previously the State had granted an allowance of \$50 per annum to each needy family afflicted with the burden of a feeble-minded child. In Illinois an experimental school for idiots and feeble-minded children was opened in 1865 as an offshoot of the school for deaf-mutes at Jacksonville. In the course of a few years this school obtained a separate organization, and new institution buildings were constructed at Lincoln and occupied in 1873. The Hillside Home, a private school, was opened at Fayville, Mass., in 1870.

Thus, up to 1874, twenty-six years after this work was begun in America, public institutions for the feeble-minded had been established in seven States. These institutions then had under training a total of 1,041 pupils. There were also the two private institutions in Massachusetts at Barre and Fayville, with a total of 69 inmates.

The early history of these pioneer State institutions in many respects was very similar. They were practically all begun as tentative experiments in the face of great public distrust and doubt as to the value of the results to be obtained. In Connecticut the commissioners found a "settled conviction of a large majority of the citizens of the Commonwealth that idiots were a class so utterly helpless that it was a waste of time even to collect any statistics regarding them." Very little was known of the causes, frequency, nature, or varieties of idiocy, or of the principles and methods to be employed in successfully training and caring for this class of persons.



The annual reports of the early superintendents, Drs. Howe, Wilbur, Brown, Parrish, and Knight, exhaustively considered the subject in all relations, and graphically presented to legislators and the public convincing and unanswerable reasons as to the feasibility and necessity of granting to feeble-minded children according to their ability the same opportunities for education that were given to their more fortunate brothers and sisters in the public schools.

All of these schools were organized as strictly educational institutions. In one of his earlier reports Dr. Howe says, "It is a link in the chain of common schools,—the last indeed, but still a necessary link in order to embrace all the children in the State." Again he says, "This institution, being intended for a school, should not be converted into an asylum for incurables." Dr. Wilbur, in his seventh annual report, says, "A new institution in a new field of education has the double mission of securing the best possible results, and at the same time of making that impression upon the public mind as will give faith in its object." With the limited capacity of these schools as established, it seemed best to advocate the policy of admitting only the higher-grade cases, where the resulting improvement and development could be compared with that of normal children.

It was hoped and believed that a large proportion of this higher-grade or "improvable" class of idiots could be so developed and educated that they would be capable of supporting themselves and of creditably maintaining an independent position in the community. It was maintained that the State should not assume the permanent care of these defectives, but that they should be returned to their homes after they had been trained and educated. It was the belief of the managers that only a relatively small number of inmates could be successfully cared for in one institution. It was deemed unwise to congregate a large number of persons suffering under any common infirmity.

Nearly every one of these early institutions was opened at or near the capitals of their various States, in order that the members of the legislature might closely watch their operations and personally see their need and the results of the instruction and training of these idiots. No institution was ever abandoned or given up after having been established. In all of the institutions the applications for admission were far in excess of their capacity.

In the course of a few years, in the annual reports of these institutions we find the superintendents regretting that it was not expedient to return to the community a certain number of the cases who had received all the instruction the school had to offer. When the limit of age was reached, it was a serious problem to decide what should be done with the trained boy or girl. It was found that only a small proportion, even of these selected pupils, could be so developed and improved that they could go out into the world and support themselves independently. A larger number, as a result of the school discipline and training, could be taken home where they became comparatively harmless and unobjectionable members of the family, capable, under the loving and watchful care of their friends, of earning by their labor as much as it cost to maintain them. But in many cases the guardians of these children were unwilling to remove them from the institution, and begged that they might be allowed to remain where they could be made happy and kept from harm. Many of these cases were homeless and friendless, and, if sent away from the school, could only be transferred to almshouses where they became depraved and demoralized by association with adult paupers and vagrants of both sexes. It was neither wise nor humane to turn these boys and girls out to shift for themselves. The placing out of these feeble-minded persons always proved unsatisfactory. Even those who had suitable homes and friends able and willing to become responsible for them, by the death of these relatives were thrown on their own resources and drifted into pauperism and crime. It gradually became evident that a certain number of these higher-grade cases needed lifelong care and supervision, and that there was no suitable provision for this permanent custody outside these special institutions.

Once it was admitted that our full duty toward this class must include the retention and guardianship of some of these cases who had been trained in the schools, the wisdom and necessity of still further broadening the work became apparent. It was found that more than one-half of the applications for admission, and those by far the most insistent, were in behalf of the "unimprovables," as Dr. Howe described them. This lower class of idiots, many of them with untidy, disgusting, and disagreeable habits, feeble physically, perhaps deformed and misshapen, often partially paralyzed or subject to epilepsy, cannot be given suitable care at home. There is no



greater burden possible in a home or a neighborhood. It has been well said that by institution care, for every five idiots cared for we restore four productive persons to the community; for, whereas at home the care of each of these children practically requires the time and energies of one person, in an institution the proportion of paid employees is not over one to each five inmates. The home care of a low-grade idiot consumes so much of the working capacity of the wage-earner of the household that often the entire family become pauperized. Humanity and public policy demanded that these families should be relieved of the burden of these helpless idiots. From the nature of their infirmities it is evident that the care of this class must last as long as they live. As nearly every one of these low-grade idiots eventually becomes a public burden, it is better to assume this care when they are young and susceptible of a certain amount of training than to receive them later on, undisciplined, helpless, destructive, adult idiots.

The brighter class of the feeble-minded, with their weak will power and deficient judgment, are easily influenced for evil, and are prone to become vagrants, drunkards, and thieves. The modern scientific study of the deficient and delinquent classes as a whole has demonstrated that a large proportion of our criminals, inebriates, and prostitutes are really congenital imbeciles, who have been allowed to grow up without any attempt being made to improve or discipline them. Society suffers the penalty of this neglect in an increase of pauperism and vice, and finally, at a greatly increased cost, is compelled to take charge of adult idiots in almshouses and hospitals, and of imbecile criminals in jails and prisons, generally during the remainder of their natural lives. As a matter of mere economy, it is now believed that it is better and cheaper for the community to assume the permanent care of this class before they have carried out a long career of expensive crime.

Dr. Kerlin has ably presented to this Conference the special subject of moral imbecility. This class of moral imbeciles may show little or no deficiency of the intellectual faculties, but in early childhood manifest a marked absence or perversion of the moral sense, as shown by motiveless, persistent lying and thieving, a blind and headlong impulse toward arson, and a delight in cruelty to animals or to young, helpless companions. These children, if they live, are predestined to become inmates of our insane hospitals or jails, and

for the good of the community should be early recognized and subjected to lifelong moral quarantine.

Dr. Kerlin, in his report to this Conference in 1884, says : —

There is no field of political economy which can be worked to better advantage, for the diminution of crime, pauperism, and insanity, than that of idiocy. The early recognition of some of its special and more dangerous forms should be followed by their withdrawal from unwholesome environments and their permanent sequestration before they are pronounced criminals and have, by the tuition of the slums, acquired a precocity that deceives even experts. Only a small percentage should ever be returned to the community, and then only under conditions that would preclude the probability of their assuming social relations under marriage, or becoming sowers of moral and physical disease under the garb of professional tramps and degraded prostitutes. How many of your criminals, inebriates, and prostitutes are congenital imbeciles ! How many of your insane are really feeble-minded or imbecile persons, wayward or neglected in their early training, and at last conveniently housed in hospitals, after having wrought mischief, entered social relations, reproduced their kind, antagonized experts and lawyers, puzzled philanthropists, and in every possible manner retaliated on their progenitors for their origin, and on the community for their misapprehension ! How many of your incorrigible boys, lodged in the houses of refuge, to be half educated in letters and wholly unreached in morals, are sent into the community the moral idiots they were at the beginning, only more powerfully armed for mischief ! And pauperism breeding other paupers, what is it but imbecility let free to do its mischief ?

The tendency to lead dissolute lives is especially noticeable in the females. A feeble-minded girl is exposed as no other girl in the world is exposed. She has not sense enough to protect herself from the perils to which women are subjected. Often bright and attractive, if at large they either marry and bring forth in geometrical ratio a new generation of defectives and dependants, or become irresponsible sources of corruption and debauchery in the communities where they live. There is hardly a poorhouse in this land where there are not two or more feeble-minded women with from one to four illegitimate children each. There is every reason in morality, humanity, and public policy that these feeble-minded women should be under permanent and watchful guardianship, especially during the child-bearing age. A feeble-minded girl of the higher grade was accepted as a pupil at the Massachusetts School



for the Feeble-minded when she was fifteen years of age. At the last moment the mother refused to send her to the school, as she "could not bear the disgrace of publicly admitting that she had a feeble-minded child." Ten years later the girl was committed to the institution by the court, after she had given birth to six illegitimate children, four of whom were still living and all feeble-minded. The city where she lived had supported her at the almshouse for a period of several months at each confinement, had been compelled to assume the burden of the life-long support of her progeny, and finally decided to place her in permanent custody. Her mother had died broken-hearted several years previously.

Modern usage has sanctioned the use of the term "feeble-minded" to include all degrees and types of congenital defect, from that of the simply backward boy or girl but little below the normal standard of intelligence to the profound idiot, a helpless, speechless, disgusting burden, with every degree of deficiency between these extremes. The lack may be so slight as to involve only the ability to properly decide questions of social propriety or conduct, or simply questions of morality, or it may profoundly affect every faculty. In theory, the differences between these various degrees of deficiency are marked and distinct, while in practice the lines of separation are entirely indefinite, and individuals as they grow to adult life may be successively classed in different grades. "Idiocy," generically used, covers the whole range referred to, but is now specifically used to denote only the lowest grades. "Imbecility" has reference to the higher grades. "Feeble-Minded" is a less harsh expression, and satisfactorily covers the whole ground.

We have learned from the researches of modern pathology that in many cases the arrested or perverted development is not merely functional or a delayed infantile condition, but is directly due to the results of actual organic disease, or injury to the brain or nervous system, occurring either before birth or in early infancy.

The work of caring for this class in this country has been greatly aided by the active influence of the Association of Medical Officers of American Institutions for Idiotic and Feeble-minded Persons. This society was organized in 1876, during the Centennial Exposition at Philadelphia, and held its first meeting at the Pennsylvania Training School at Elwyn. The object of the Association is the consideration and discussion of all questions relating to the manage-

ment, training, and education of idiots and feeble-minded persons. It also lends its influence to the establishment and fostering of institutions for this purpose. The Association meets annually for the reading of papers and the discussion of the various phases of this work.

The material growth and separate history of the older institutions and the numerous public and private schools that have been opened in this country since 1874 are too comprehensive to be considered in detail in this report. The accompanying table shows the name, location, date of organization, and capacity of the various public institutions as existing at the close of 1892:—

Name.	Location.	Date of Organization.	Capacity.
California Home for Care and Training of Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Glen Ellen, . . . . .	1885	259
Connecticut School for Imbeciles, . . . . .	Lakeville, . . . . .	1852	130
Illinois Asylum for Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Lincoln, . . . . .	1865	536
Indiana School for Feeble-Minded Youth, . . . . .	Fort Wayne, . . . . .	1879	421
Iowa Institution for Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Glenwood, . . . . .	1876	456
Kansas State Asylum for Idiotic and Imbecile Youth, . . . . . }	Winfield, . . . . .	1881	102
Kentucky Institution for the Education and Training of Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Frankfort, . . . . .	1860	156
Maryland Asylum and Training School for the Feeble-Minded, . . . . . }	Owing's Mills, . . . . .	1888	40
Massachusetts School for the Feeble-Minded, . . . . . }	Waltham, . . . . .	1848	450
Minnesota School for the Feeble-Minded, . . . . . }	Faribault, . . . . .	1879	332
Nebraska Institution for Feeble-Minded Youth, . . . . . }	Beatrice, . . . . .	1887	154
New York State Institution for Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Syracuse, . . . . .	1851	502
New York State Custodial Asylum for Feeble-Minded Women, . . . . . }	Newark, . . . . .	1885	345
Randall's Island Hospital and School, . . . . .	New York Harbor	1870	364
New Jersey Home for the Education and Care of Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Vineland, . . . . .	1888	154
New Jersey State Institution for Feeble-Minded Women, . . . . . }	Vineland, . . . . .	1886	65
Ohio Institution for the Education of Feeble-Minded Youth, . . . . . }	Columbus, . . . . .	1857	822
Pennsylvania Training School for Feeble-Minded Children, . . . . . }	Elwyn, . . . . .	1853	851
Washington School for Defective Youth, . . . . .	Vancouver, . . . . .	1892	25

At the close of the year 1892 these nineteen public institutions for the feeble-minded had under care and training a total of 6,009



inmates. The buildings and grounds in use for this purpose represent an outlay of more than \$4,000,000. The annual public expenditure for the instruction and maintenance of these defectives now amounts to over \$1,000,000. There are also nine private schools for the feeble-minded in the United States, caring for a total of 216 pupils.

The recognition of the characteristics, limitations, and needs of these various classes, and the results of experience in their training, care, and guardianship, have materially modified and broadened the scope and policy of our American institutions for the feeble-minded. To-day the advantages of these public institutions are not confined to the brighter cases needing school training especially, but have been gradually extended to a greater or less extent in the different States to all the grades and types of idiocy. With all these various classes pleading for admission, it is not strange that many of these institutions have become far more extensive than their founders dreamed of or hoped for. Successive legislatures have been ready to enlarge existing institutions when they would not grant appropriations for establishing new ones. The evil effects feared from congregating a large number of this class have not been realized, or have been minimized by careful classification and separation of the different groups. In fact, we find we must congregate them to get the best results. In order to have companionship, that most necessary thing in the education of all children, we must have large numbers from which to make up our small classes of those who are of an equal degree of intelligence.

The essentially educational character of the earlier institutions has been maintained, but the relations of the different parts of instruction are now better understood. The strictly school exercises, in the early days the most prominent feature, still perform their necessary and proper functions, but now in harmony with and preliminary to the more practical objects of the institution. Education, as applied to the development of these feeble-minded children, is now understood in the broadest sense, not as mere intellectual training, but as uniform cultivation of the whole being, physically, mentally, and morally. The end and aim of all our teaching and training is to make the child helpful to himself and useful to others.

Sir W. Mitchell says, "It is of very little use to be able to read words of two or three letters, but it is of great use to teach an im-

becile to put his clothes on and take them off, to be of cleanly habits, to eat tidily, to control his temper, to avoid hurting others, to act with politeness, to be truthful, to know something of numbers, to go with messages, to tell the hour by the clock, to know something of the value of coins, and a hundred other such things."

As now organized, our American institutions are broadly divided into two departments, the school, or educational, and the custodial. In the school department the children are instructed in the ordinary branches of the common schools. As compared with the education of normal children, it is a difference of degree, and not of kind. The progressive games and occupations of the kindergarten, object teaching, educational gymnastics, manual training, and the other graphic and attractive methods' now so successfully applied in the education of normal children, are especially adapted to the training of the feeble-minded. These principles of physiological training of the senses and faculties, of exercising and developing the power of attention, perception, and judgment by teaching the qualities and properties of concrete objects instead of expecting the child to absorb ready-made knowledge from books, of progressively training the eye, the hand, and the ear,—these were the methods formulated by Seguin, and elaborated and applied by Richards, Wilbur, and Howe, years before the era of the kindergarten and the dawn of the new education. It would be difficult to properly estimate the influence of these original and successful methods of instructing the feeble-minded in suggesting and shaping the radical changes that have been made in the methods of modern primary teaching of normal children. With these feeble-minded children the instruction must begin on a lower plane: the progress is slower, and the pupil cannot be carried so far. In a school with several hundred children, a satisfactory gradation of classes can be made if a small proportion of classes showing irregular and unusual deficiencies are assigned to special classes for instruction through individual methods.

Most of the pupils of this grade learn to read and write, to know something of numbers, and acquire a more or less practical knowledge of common affairs. Careful attention is paid to the inculcation of the simple principles of morality, the teaching of correct habits and behavior, and observance of the ordinary amenities of life.

The most prominent feature of our educational training to-day is the attention paid to instruction in industrial occupations and man-



ual labor. In this "education by doing" we not only have a very valuable means of exercising and developing the dormant faculties and defective bodies of our pupils, but at the same time we are training them to become capable and useful men and women. The recent reports of these institutions show in detail the large variety and amount of work done by these children. Carpentering, painting, printing, brick-making, stock-raising, gardening, farming, domestic work, the manufacture of clothing, boots and shoes, brooms, brushes, and other industries, are now successfully and profitably carried on by the pupils in these schools, in connection with the strictly mental training.

Each year a certain number of persons of this class go out from these institutions and lead useful, harmless lives. Some of the institutions where only the brightest class of imbeciles are received, and where the system of industrial training has been very carefully carried out, report that from 20 to 30 per cent of the pupils are discharged as absolutely self-supporting. In other institutions, where the lower-grade cases are received, the percentage of cases so discharged is considerably less. It is safe to say that not over 10 to 15 per cent of our inmates can be made self-supporting in the sense of going out into the community and securing and retaining a situation and prudently spending their earnings. With all our training we cannot give our pupils that indispensable something known as good, plain "common sense." The amount and value of their labor depend upon the amount of oversight and supervision practicable. But it is safe to say that over 50 per cent of the adults of the higher grade who have been under training from childhood are capable, under intelligent supervision, of doing a sufficient amount of work to pay for the actual cost of their support, whether in an institution or at home.

The custodial department includes the lower grades of idiots, the juvenile insane, and the epileptics. Some of these children are as helpless as infants, incapable of standing alone, or of dressing or feeding themselves, or of making their wants known. Other cases are excitable and noisy, with markedly destructive tendencies. The chief indication with these lower-grade cases is to see that their wants are attended to, and to make them comfortable and happy as long as they live. But even with these cases much improvement is possible in the way of teaching them to wait on themselves, to dress

and undress, to feed themselves, in attention to personal cleanliness and habits of order and obedience. As a result of the kindly but firm discipline, the patient habit-teaching, and the well-ordered institution routine, a large proportion of these children become much less troublesome and disgusting, so much so that the burden and expense of their care and support are materially and permanently lessened.

In the custodial department are classed also the moral imbeciles and the adults of both sexes who have graduated from the school department, or are past school age, but cannot safely be trusted, either for their own good or the good of the community, out from under strict and judicious surveillance. For these classes the institution provides a home where they may lead happy, harmless, useful lives.

The daily routine work of a large institution furnishes these trained adults with abundant opportunities for doing simple manual labor, which otherwise would have to be done by paid employees. Outside of an institution it would be impossible to secure the experienced and patient supervision and direction necessary to obtain practical, remunerative results from the comparatively unskilled labor of these feeble-minded people. In the institution the boys assist the baker, carpenter, and engineer. They do much of the shoemaking, the tailoring, and the painting. They drive teams, build roads, and dig ditches. Nearly all of the institutions have large farms and gardens, which supply enormous quantities of milk and vegetables for the consumption of the inmates. This farm and garden work is largely done by the adult male imbeciles. The females do the laundry work, make the clothing and bedding, and do a large share of all the other domestic work of these immense households. Many of these adult females, naturally kind and gentle, have the instinctive feminine love for children, and are of great assistance in caring for the feeble and crippled children in the custodial department. These simple people are much happier and better off in every respect when they know they are doing some useful and necessary work. Some of the restless moral imbeciles could hardly be controlled and managed if their surplus energies were not worked off by a reasonable amount of manual labor.

The average running expenses of these institutions have been gradually and largely reduced by this utilization of the industrial



abilities of the trained inmates. At the Pennsylvania institution the per capita cost for all the inmates has been reduced from \$300 to a little over \$100 per annum, largely from the fact that the work of caring for the low-grade children in the custodial department is done to a very large extent by the inmates themselves. Dr. Doren, of Ohio, after an experience of thirty years in this work, has offered, if the State will give him a thousand acres of land, to guarantee to care for every custodial case in Ohio without expense to the State.

Nearly all of the States making provision for the feeble-minded have practically followed what is known as the colony plan of organization; that is, starting with the school department as a centre, with the various subdivisions of the custodial department subsequently added under the same general management. Thus at the present time in nearly every one of our institutions there will be found custodial departments for each sex, industrial departments, hospitals for the sick, farm colonies, and in a few, buildings especially designed for the care and treatment of epileptics. In his report to the Nineteenth Conference of Charities Dr. G. H. Knight says : —

Legislatures to the contrary notwithstanding, it is not because superintendents covet large buildings, large grounds, and all the care and watchfulness that come from the proper management of what we call a colony, which makes them urge the gathering together of great numbers of this class of defectives, but because they have learned in the hard school of experience that they must have large numbers from which to draw children enough of equal mental endowments to do even the simplest thing well. They have found that, even for money, it is difficult to get suitable people who are willing to come into contact with the lowest grade in the right spirit, — a spirit which demands patience, cheerfulness, and affection. But they do find that what is called “the imbecile” will share his pleasures and attainments with his weaker brother with a sense of high privilege in being allowed to share it; that none make tenderer care-takers nor, under supervision, more watchful ones; and that the bond of fellowship so engendered is of lasting benefit. This is why the colony plan recommends itself to us as superintendents. Experience has taught us that these children, under careful direction, are happier, better cared for, more trustworthy when trust is given, more self-sacrificing and self-contained, and in every way benefited by the training and occupation and amusement which a large institution makes possible, and which it is impossible to gain when there are few in number.

The colony plan divides the institution into comparatively small families, each with peculiar and distinctive needs, and each group under the immediate and personal supervision of experienced and competent officers, who are directly responsible to the medical superintendent. This arrangement retains all the good points of a small institution, and secures the manifest advantages of a large one.

In the additions made to existing institutions and the new institutions built during the past twenty years, the detached or so-called "cottage" plan of construction has been pretty generally adopted, in order to secure the necessary classification and separation of the different classes of these defectives.

The experience of these institutions in these enlargements has been that plain, substantial, detached buildings can be provided for the custodial cases at an expense of not over \$400 per capita. These detached departments are generally supplied with sewerage, water supply, laundry, store-room, and often heating facilities from a central plant, at relatively small expense compared with the cost of installation and operation of a separate plant for each division.

In New York a radical departure was made from this plan by the organization of the Custodial Asylum for Adult Feeble-minded Females at Newark, under a separate management. It was held that in that populous State, with its thousands of feeble-minded persons needing training and care, it would not be desirable or possible to attempt to provide for all classes of the feeble-minded in one institution. A similar special institution for imbecile women has since been organized in New Jersey.

The census of 1890 shows a total of 95,571 idiotic and feeble-minded persons in the United States. It is certain that this enumeration does not include many cases where the parents are unwilling to admit the mental defect of their children. It is safe to say that, taking the country as a whole, there are two feeble-minded persons to every thousand people. Of this vast number only 6,315, or six per cent, are now cared for in these special institutions.

The public appreciation of the educational, custodial, and preventive value of the work is shown by the willingness and liberality with which these institutions are maintained and supported. The remarkable rapidity with which in the Western States the public institutions of this character have been built and filled with pupils within the past two decades is proof positive of the necessity for the

organization of such institutions and of the desire of the parents and friends of this class of defectives to place them under intelligent care and instruction. This special care is now recognized as not only charitable, but economical and conservative. Each hundred dollars invested now saves a thousand in the next generation.

Sixteen States have now opened institutions for the feeble-minded. The State of Michigan, at the last session of the legislature, authorized the establishment of a school for this class. Active efforts have already been made to establish similar institutions in Wisconsin, Colorado, Missouri, Texas, Delaware, Virginia, and Georgia. It is not unreasonable to hope and expect that in the near future an institution for the feeble-minded will be provided in every State in the Union.













